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Käthe Kollwitz

Käthe Kollwitz

Engravings Drawings Sculpture

A German Art Council Exhibition

London 1967 Bethnal Green Museum

AN OPPORTUNITY OF SHOWING IN LONDON an exhibition of the drawings, engravings and sculpture by Käthe Kollwitz, which has been organised by the Deutscher Kunstrat, is warmly welcomed by the Arts Council. It is also grateful to the Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum for agreeing to the exhibition being shown in Bethnal Green Museum. Special thanks are due to Dr. Brigitte Lohmeyer, Cultural Attache at the German Embassy, London, who secured the exhibition for us, Dr. Kurt Martin who has selected the works and written the introduction to the catalogue and Dr. Thiele of the Deutscher Kunstrat who was also responsible for a number of previous exhibitions of German Art which have been shown here by the Council.

GABRIEL WHITE

"I WANT TO WORK for the people of our own age, they are so lost and in need of help." Käthe Kollwitz lived and worked to achieve a socialism of action, "understood as the long-desired brotherhood of man." Her creative sympathy has made her one of the most humane figures of our time. She was born in 1867 in Königsberg and has her roots in the melancholy people and the vast, unrelieved landscape of East Prussia. One of her grandfathers was founder and preacher of the first pietistic community in Germany. Her father had studied law, but later decided to become a mason and worked in this trade until his death. In 1891, when twenty-four, Käthe married Dr. Karl Kollwitz, a doctor who had started a practice in north Berlin, the slum area of the city. She lived there until 1943 when the house was bombed. She then stayed with friends in Nordhausen and later fled to Moritzburg, near Dresden, where Prince Ernst Heinrich von Sachsen helped her find somewhere to live. She was then seventy-seven. She died there on 22 April 1945 as Germany was suffering its final defeat.

Her style was influenced by Naturalism, a movement which rejected the

social conventions of the time and aimed at portraying nature and people as they "really" are, without false pathos or idealisation. The values sought by men were to be found in this world and in its tragedy. The worker and his wretched lot were discovered as themes for art, the farmer was no longer a mere symbol or decorative figure but a man who laboriously worked the land. Zola found beauty in natural and human ugliness, as did Ibsen and Strindberg, Tolstoi, Dostojevski and Gorki, and, in Germany, Gerhart Hauptmann. Käthe Kollwitz found inspiration in all their works, but her environment played a major role in her life and was a decisive influence on her choice of motifs. "The unsolved problems" of the workers, she said, "continually tormented and plagued me. It was, partly, the realisation of these problems which obliged me to paint the lower classes, and in their constant and repeated portrayal I found an outlet which helped me to bear with living." She was capable of making the troubles of others her own and sorrow was for her "a mighty power as varied ... as life itself." (Gerhart Hauptmann).

Early on in her career, Käthe Kollwitz chose graphics as her medium. While still under the influence of her teacher, Max Klinger, she liked etching but later she preferred woodcuts and lithographs because of their stronger plastic impact. This plastic tendency soon looked for independent expression. Over a number of years Käthe Kollwitz worked on a monument for her younger son who was killed in October 1914. His death became for her a sort of personal obligation. Two years later she noted in her diary: "There's a drawing made, a mother letting her dead son slide into her arms. I could do a hundred similar drawings but still can't seem to come any closer to him. I'm still searching for him as if it were in the very work itself that I had to find him."

The first etchings were narrative illustrations, then followed various series on which the artist spent long periods: the weavers' rising and the peasant war. The present is experienced in historical projection. In 1922–23 she did seven huge woodcuts in the "War" series and between 1934–37, when almost seventy, she did eight lithographs which showed her shattering realisation of death. The self-portraits occurring continuously throughout her work are a kind of account rendered both to herself and to the world.

In the later decades her works stand for more than just the specific, individual instance. They represent the whole of humanity and are eternally valid and applicable; they express not only the pain of suffering but its necessity. It is the sufferer and not the inflicter of the pain who is shown. "Even today, I do not know whether the strength which produced my work is somehow related to religion . . ."

Käthe Kollwitz's style remained traditional. She did not go in for new modes such as Expressionism, or any other of the modern trends. Her work is almost beyond such categorisation. It is rather a German contribution to the people of Europe, for rarely have misery and suffering been portrayed with more dignity, respect and understanding. It is reported that the American government in 1942, wanted to use her poster of starving children in connection with the proposed food rationing programme. France's recognition of the artist was formulated by none less than Romain Rolland, who, on her sixtieth birthday, wrote the following: "L'œuvre de Käthe Kollwitz est le plus grand poème de l'Allemagne de ce temps, qui reflète l'épreuve de la peine des humbles et des simples. Cette femme au cœur viril les a pris dans ses yeux, dans ses bras maternel, avec une sombre et tendre pitié. Elle est la voix du silence des peuples sacrifiés."

KURT MARTIN

November - Dezember 12

Ich bin und der Kriegsfolge gesetzt. Freilich will ich den Hof, die Eltern noch einmal umarmen, nichts weiter verbrechen so wie, aber weiter noch besser werden kann. Wenn es jetzt stirbt, so das wenigstens gewinnt. Hier ist eine Stelle aus einem Gespräch Sokrates, die ungefähr so [illegible] Dieses ganz ausdrückt, was ich [illegible] habe

daß ich hinfahren muß in diesen Krieg hinfahren, ehe ich dies Werk vollbracht. Nun, so es nur wenigstens vergönnt dies Werk gewonnen zu haben. Jetzt [illegible] andere graphische Arbeiten, das Glatte gegen den Krieg für den inneren Gewerbeschutzbund, dann das Große Triumphblatt für die Befreiungsfolge Tod [illegible] Schlacht. Inzwischen möchte ich gern diese Folge graphisch arbeiten, entweder in Holzschnitt oder wieder auf Kupfer.

Am Totensonntag waren Karl und ich zusammen in der Versammlung gewesen für die Weltfriedensgefallenen zu Ehren Ausgestellten, wenn wir mich um Verbreitung eines internationalen Gemeinsinns, kurz gegen den Krieg handelt, ich ein warmes Interesse und lebendiges Gefühl. Freilich meine Kunst in dem Sinne wie z. B. der Schmidt Rottluffsche ist meine nicht. Aber Kunst doch. Jeder aber tut was er kann. Ich bin einverstanden damit, daß meine Kunst Zweck hat. Ich will wirken in dieser Zeit, in der die Menschen so einseitig und kulturbedürftig sind.

CATALOGUE

Kl, followed by an Arabic numeral, denotes the number of the work in August Klipstein's "Käthe Kollwitz, Verzeichnis des graphischen Werkes." Bern 1955.

1 An der Kirchenmauer – At the church wall
1893, etching
Kl 19
This was among the first works exhibited by the artist and it drew the attention of the critics.

2 Selbstbildnis am Tisch – Self-portrait at table
circa 1893, etching
Kl 14

3–8 Ein Weberaufstand – A Rising of the Weavers
This series of 6 prints was begun in 1893, under the influence of the first performance of Gerhart Hauptmann's naturalistic play "The Weavers." It was completed in 1897 and is based on a revolt of the weavers in Peterswaldau and Langenbielau in Silesia, in 1844. It was brutally suppressed, and was one of the social upheavals which foreshadowed the revolution of 1848. The introduction of mechanical looms had further depressed wages and working hours were necessarily shortened; the result was hunger and desperate poverty.

3 Not – Destitution
1897, lithograph
no. 1 of series
Kl 34

4 Tod – Death
1897, lithograph
no. 2 of series
Kl 35

5 Beratung – Conference
1898, lithograph
no. 3 of series
Kl 36

6 Weberzug – Weavers' Procession
1897, etching
no. 4 of series
Kl 32

7 Sturm – Storm
1897, etching and mezzotint
no. 5 of series
Kl 33

8 Ende – End
1897, etching, aquatint and mezzotint
no. 6 of series
Kl 37

9 **Frau an der Wiege – Woman at the cradle**
1897, etching
Kl 38

10 **Frau mit übereinandergelegten Händen – Woman with folded hands**
1898, etching
Kl 41

11 **Aufruhr – Commotion**
1899, etching
Kl 44

12 **Zertretene – The Downtrodden**
1900, etching
Kl 48

13 **Die Carmagnole – The Carmagnole**
1901, etching, aquatint and mezzotint
Kl 49
The Carmagnole was composed when Carmagnole, near Turin, was captured in 1792 and it became a sort of battle song of the French Revolution. It ends with the refrain: "Dansons la Carmagnole – Vive le son de canon!"
This print is sometimes called "Dance around the guillotine."

14 **Hamburger Kneipe – Hamburg pub**
1901, vernis-mou
Kl 58

15 **Arbeiterfrau im Profil nach links – Left profile of working woman**
1903, lithograph
Kl 67

16 **Brustbild einer Arbeiterfrau mit blauem Tuch – Bust of working woman with a blue cloth**
1903, lithograph in three colours
Kl 68

17 **Frau mit totem Kind – Woman with dead child**
1903, etching
Kl 72

18 **Junges Paar – Young couple**
1904, etching
Kl 73

19–25 **Der Bauernkrieg – The Peasant War**
This series of 7 prints was done between 1903 and 1908. In 1525, the peasants of southern and central Germany revolted. This was one of the first social revolutions whose main aims were human right, freedom from serfdom, the restriction of taxes, the election of priests by the community and other democratic rights. The leaders were Götz von Berlichingen and Florian Geyer. The revolutionaries were beaten and brutally punished.

19 **Die Pflüger – The Ploughmen**
1906, etching and aquatint
no. 1 of series
Kl 94

20 Vergewaltigt – Violation
1907, etching
no. 2 of series
Kl 97

21 Beim Dengeln – Whetting the scythe
1905, etching
no. 3 of series
Kl 90

22 Bewaffnung in einem Gewölbe – Arming in a cellar
1906, etching
no. 4 of series
Kl 95

23 Losbruch – Outbreak
1903, etching
no. 5 of series
Kl 66

24 Schlachtfeld – Battlefield
1907, etching
no. 6 of series
Kl 96

25 Die Gefangenen – The Captives
1908, etching
no. 7 of series
Kl 98

26 Inspiration – Inspiration
1905, etching
A supplementary print of the series "The Peasant War"
Kl 91

27 Selbstbildnis mit der Hand an der Stirn –
Self-portrait with hand on the forehead
1910, etching
Kl 106

28 Schwangere Frau – Pregnant woman
1910, vernis-mou and etching
Kl 108

29 Mutter mit Kind auf dem Arm – Mother with child in her arms
1910, etching
2nd impression
Kl 110

30 Tod, Frau und Kind – Death, woman and child
Kl 113
1910, etching

31 Tod und Frau um das Kind ringend – Death and woman struggling for child
1911, etching
Kl 118

32 Das Warten – Waiting
1914, etching
Kl 126

33 Mütter – Mothers
1919, lithograph
2nd impression
Kl 135

34 Trauernder Mann – Man sorrowing
1919, etching
Kl 137
(left part of a graphic memorial for Karl Liebknecht)

35 Gedenkblatt für Karl Liebknecht – Memorial for Karl Liebknecht
1919/1920, woodcut
Kl 139
4th state with the inscription: "From the Living to the Dead. In memory of 15 January 1919." Karl Liebknecht was the leading social-democratic member of the German Parliament. He was murdered on 15 January 1919.

36 Nachdenkende Frau – Woman reflecting
1920, lithograph
impression 2 a
Kl 147

37 Tod mit Frau im Schoss – Death with a woman in its lap
1921, woodcut
Kl 151

38 Gefallen – Fallen
1921, lithograph
Kl 153

39 Helft Russland – Help Russia
1921, lithograph
KI 154

40 Selbstbildnis von vorn – Self-portrait, front view
1923, woodcut
KI 168

41–47 Krieg – War
The 7 prints of this series were done in 1922/23 and shown in 1924. "They contain a statement about life during the period 1914–1918 ..." (Käthe Kollwitz).

41 Das Opfer – The Victim
1922/23, woodcut
no. 1 of series
KI 177

42 Die Freiwilligen – The Volunteers
1922/23, woodcut
no. 2 of series
KI 178

43 Die Eltern – The Parents
1923, woodcut, 3rd impression
no. 3 of series
KI 179

44 **Die Witwe I – The Widow I**
1922/23, woodcut
no. 4 of series
KI 180

45 **Die Witwe II – The Widow II**
1922/23, woodcut
no. 5 of series
KI 181

46 **Die Mütter – The Mothers**
1922/23, woodcut
no. 6 of series
KI 182

47 **Das Volk – The people**
1922/23, woodcut
no. 7 of series
KI 183

48 **Abschied und Tod – Parting and death**
1923/24, lithograph
KI 187

49 **Brot – Bread**
1924, lithograph
KI 196

50 **Selbstbildnis – Self-portrait**
1924, lithograph
KI 198

51 **Verbrüderung – Fraternization**
1924, lithograph
KI 199

52 **Selbstbildnis – Self-portrait**
1924, woodcut
KI 202

53 **Städtisches Obdach – A town shelter**
1926, lithograph
KI 219

54 **Junge Mutter mit Säugling – Young mother and infant**
1926, lithograph
KI 220

55 **Maria und Elisabeth – Mary and Elizabeth**
1928, woodcut
KI 234

56 Schlafende mit Kind – Sleeping woman with child
1929, woodcut
KI 235

57 Zwei schwatzende Frauen mit zwei Kindern –
Two chattering women with two children
1930, lithograph
KI 240

58–64 Tod – Death
This series of 8 prints was executed between 1934–1937

58 Tod hält Mädchen im Schoß – Death holding a girl in his lap
1934, lithograph
no. 2 of series
KI 257

59 Tod greift in Kinderschar – Death snatching among a group of children
1934, lithograph
no. 3 of series
KI 258

60 Tod packt eine Frau – Death seizes a woman
1934, lithograph
no. 4 of series
KI 259

61 Tod auf der Landstrasse – Death on a country road
1934, lithograph
no. 5 of series
KI 260

62 Tod wird als Freund erkannt – Death is recognized as a friend
1934/35, lithograph
no. 6 of series
KI 261

63 Tod im Wasser – Death in the water
1934/35, lithograph
no. 7 of series
KI 262

64 Ruf des Todes – The call of death
1934/35, lithograph
no. 8 of series
KI 263

65 Selbstbildnis im Profil nach rechts – Self-portrait, right profile
1938, lithograph
KI 285
One of the artist's last works.

Zeichnungen – Drawings

66 Kopf eines Mädchens – Head of a girl
circa 1892, indian ink
Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich

67 Alte Frau an der Kirchenmauer – Old woman at the church wall
1893, charcoal
Private collection

68 Frau mit neugeborenem Kind in der Wiege –
Woman with new-born child in the cradle
1897, pen and ink
Private collection

69 Männerköpfe – Heads of men
circa 1900, charcoal
Private collection

70 Tanz um die Guillotine – Dance around the guillotine
1901, charcoal
Private collection

71 Losbruch – Outbreak
circa 1902, charcoal
Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich

72 Entwurf zu "Junges Paar" – Sketch for "Young couple"
circa 1903, charcoal
Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich

73 Razzia – Razzia
charcoal
Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich

74 Frau mit aufgestütztem Kopf – Woman holding her head
1904, charcoal
Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich

75 Pflüger – Ploughmen
circa 1906, charcoal
Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich

76 Studie zu "Schlachtfeld" aus "Bauernkrieg" –
Sketch for "Battlefield" from "The Peasant War" series
circa 1907, charcoal
Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich

77 Studie zu "Die Gefangenen" aus "Bauernkrieg" (Sohn Hans) –
Sketch for "The Prisoners " from "The Peasant War" series (The son Hans)
circa 1908, chalk
Private collection

78 Portrait Karl Kollwitz – Portrait of Karl Kollwitz
charcoal
Private collection

79 Schlafendes Kind und Armstudien – Sleeping child and sketches of arms
1909, charcoal
Private collection

80 Kauernde: Weiblicher Rückenakt – Cowering woman
circa 1910, charcoal
Private collection

81 Studie zu "Tod und Frau um das Kind ringend" –
Sketch for "Death and woman struggling for child"
circa 1911, charcoal
Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich

82 Mütter – Mothers
1919, charcoal
Private collection

83 Aufbruch – Uprising
1920
Private collection

84 Arbeiterehepaar – Working-class couple
circa 1920
German Art Council, Cologne

85 Frau mit hängenden Armen – Woman with arms hanging down
circa 1922, charcoal
German Art Council, Cologne

86 Studie zum Plakat "Mahnung zur Vorsicht bei der Arbeit" –
Sketch for the poster "Be careful at work"
1922, charcoal
Private collection

87 Frau geht in den Tod – Woman looking for death
1924, charcoal and indian ink
Private collection

88 Kopf einer Frau mit aufgestützten Händen –
Head of a woman with hands propped up
1924, charcoal
German Art Council, Cologne

89 Selbstbildnis – Self-portrait
circa 1927, charcoal
Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich

90 Schlafende – Sleeping woman
charcoal
Private collection

91 Konrad ruft der Tod – Konrad is called by death
1932
Private collection

92 Selbstbildnis – Self-portrait
1937, charcoal
Private collection

Plastik – Sculpture

93 Selbstbildnis – Self-portrait
1936, bronze

94 Grabrelief – Grave stone
1936, bronze

95 Pietà – Pietà
1936, bronze

96 Die Klage – Lament
1938, bronze

6

23

25

64

Bruk.'

82

87

96

95

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Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich
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